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ABSTRACT

A one-year study of peer tutoring in social studies was conducted among seventh grade students in Buchanan, Georgia. Although peer tutoring took place in the experimental group, the same text, supplementary materials, classroom activities, and teaching methodologies were used in both the experimental and control groups. Both groups were given pretests, posttests, and the Slosson Reading Test. In the tutor/tutee experimental group, role changes were made during each of four grading periods. Although analysis of test scores showed no significant difference in content knowledge gained between the two groups, the study supports peer tutoring as an alternative instructional method. Recommendations for implementing a program are: (1) use it to supplement teacher-directed instruction; (2) select tutors who are behavior models; (3) select tutees willing to be helped; (4) match tutor and tutee by work performance; (5) train tutors; (6) identify implementation process; and (7) evaluate through testing, observation, and questionnaire. (BY)

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PEER TUTORING AS AN
INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY
FOR SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING

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Introduction

In recent years, it has become increasingly apparent that traditional educational practices alone are inadequate for meeting the need of the widely different students who attend American schools. Techniques are needed which will offer the greatest opportunity for all students to find success. The use of peer tutoring as an instructional strategy could become a viable and useful technique for the social studies classroom.

The study of literature revealed that there was a lack of research on the effect of peer tutoring in the social studies classroom. Most of the studies reporting the effects of peer tutoring were done in the areas of reading, spelling, and mathematics. In these areas, a positive change in academic achievement usually was related to peer teaching. The studies of Baird (1977), Boraks and Allen (1977), Oakland and Williams (1975), Hamblin and Hamblin (1972), Klann (1972), Duff and Swick (1974), Dixon (1975), and Breedlove (1975) all support peer teaching and reported positive resulting gains in reading. Also Horan (1974), Amster and others (1975), and Helwig and Griffin (1974) all found peer tutoring to be successful in teaching mathematics. Ehly and Larsen (1976) found peer tutoring to be related to success in the teaching of spelling.

Because there is a dearth of research studies related to peer tutoring in the social studies area, a study was conducted during the 1981-1982 academic year to determine the effect of peer tutoring among seventh grade social studies students.

Research Design

The subjects of the study were seventh grade students enrolled in Buchanan Junior High School in Buchanan, Georgia, during the 1981-1982 academic year. This school is located in a rural county in northwest Georgia. The students, ranging from twelve to fifteen years of age, came from low and middle socio-economic families with about eighty per cent being Caucasian and twenty per cent being Black. They were heterogeneously assigned to the three seventh grade social studies classes by the alphabetic listing of their last names. Group 7A (the experimental group) had surnames beginning with the letters A through H, while Group 7B (the control group) consisted of those students whose surnames fell between I and P. Each class met for a period of fifty-five minutes during the school day.

The primary subject matter for the course was Georgia history and Georgia government. Each student was issued a copy of the text, Georgia History and Government, written by Albert B. Saye and published by the Steck-Vaughn Company. Library media filmstrip resources were used to supplement the text. The primary teaching methodologies used for both classes was an introductory class lecture, teacher-student discussion, and a variety of other related classroom activities. There were four grading periods during the school year.

For the experimental group, small groups were organized during the first grading period. These small groups were encouraged to help any student in the group that had a special need. This was done in order that the subjects would feel more comfortable in the tutor-tutee relationship. During the second grading period, the subjects were divided into two groups. Those students who had demonstrated a higher

level of proficiency, through teacher observation of attitude and motivation as well as cognitive test scores, were identified as tutors. The remainder of the class was identified as the tutees. Each tutor was assigned a tutee based on the same age and sex. Two days before subject matter testing, study questions were passed out to all students and care was taken to insure that tutors knew acceptable answers to the questions. The tutors and tutees were paired in the classroom for drills on subject matter while the teacher served primarily to facilitate interaction and to keep the students on task. In addition to regular grading procedures, charts were maintained to show grades attained by tutor-tutee pairs and encouragement was given to those students showing improvement. Private counseling sessions were conducted with those pairs that did not improve in order to attempt to pinpoint difficulties and offer suggestions for improvement.

During the third grading period, several of the pairs were changed in an effort to match stronger tutors with the weaker tutees. In two of these pairs, the same age but cross sex pairing was used. The remainder of the procedures were similar to those used in the second grading period.

During the fourth grading period, some other changes were made. Three of the weaker tutees were made tutors. Two of the weaker tutors were made tutees. During this period an effort was made to de-emphasize tutor and tutee roles and to emphasize that each student act as a tutor to his partner. All other procedures were consistent to previous grading periods.

During the first week of the academic year, the students of both the experimental and the control group were given a pretest which had been developed by the teacher. The items of this test were representative of the content material which was taught during the year. Also, at this time the Slosson Reading Test was administered to all students. At the end of the academic year, the content test which had been developed by the teacher was given to all students as a posttest.

The F test for analysis of covariance was used to determine if there were significant differences in the two groups in reference to gain in content knowledge. The Slosson Reading Test score and the pretest score were the two covariants. The posttest score was the dependent variable. The group, peer tutoring versus no peer tutoring, was the independent variable. Table I gives the results of this F test.

TABLE I

Analysis of Covariance

<u>Source of Variation</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Significance of F</u>
<u>Covariants</u>					
<u>Reading</u>	2740.604	1	2740.604	30.930	.001
<u>Pretest</u>	2692.512	1	2692.512	30.387	.001
<u>Main Effects</u>					
<u>Groups</u>	10.419	1	10.419	.118	.733
<u>Residual</u>	5050.658	57	88.608		

From the information in Table I, it may be seen that there was no significant difference in content knowledge gained between the two

groups. Peer tutoring did not seem to appreciably affect the students' gain in knowledge of the subject matter taught when compared with the gains of the members of the control group.

Conclusions

The research literature supports the technique of peer tutoring as a viable approach for teaching certain academic subjects. Although this study did not find that there was a significant difference in the gains of the peer tutored group, the outcome does support the use of peer tutoring as a viable alternative instructional method. Furthermore, several important observations were made which should positively affect the peer tutoring process in social studies teaching. Seven factors are essential in setting up a peer tutoring program: role of peer tutoring strategy in the instructional program; selection of tutors; selection of tutees; matching tutors and tutees; implementation of the peer tutoring program; and evaluation of the program. These factors will now be discussed.

Role of peer tutoring strategy in the instructional program: Peer tutoring should not be viewed as a replacement for teacher directed instruction. Instead, this program should be viewed as one more instructional strategy to be added to the broad array of methods which are already operational in the classroom. There are several class activities in the teaching of social studies which are especially well suited for the peer tutoring technique. Some of these activities are:

1. Academic games which have answer keys.
2. Flash cards with answers on the back.

3. Workbook pages with directions and answer keys.
4. Graded tests or worksheets to be corrected.
5. Rehearsing for a play.
6. Reading.
7. Catch-up work for students who have been absent.

Selecting a tutor: In the initial stages of implementing the tutor teaching process, it would be best to select only those students who have exhibited helping behaviors in less formal classroom settings. Possibly a sociogram could be devised which would show those students perceived as most helpful. Tutors who are peer favorites, or class officers who are well-liked, would help to insure the acceptance of the program among the students. Tactless students should not be selected as tutors, even though these students may do good academic work. There is no need for all tutors to be gifted students, but they must be students who are capable and willing to gain an understanding of the content materials to be covered in the tutoring program.

As well as serving as a presenter of information, a tutor will also serve as a model for the tutee. The students selected to be tutors must be ones who will provide an appropriate behavioral model. It is necessary for the tutor to assume a leadership role in the tutoring session; therefore, a tutor should be a student who will model such behaviors as staying on task and completing assigned work.

Some students with problems might eventually become good tutors. After the program is running smoothly, students who are shy, have poor self-concepts, or are underachievers may make good tutors. The important

factor in selecting those students with problems is whether the problem will interfere with the tutoring process. A student who has difficulty may be more supportive and empathetic as a tutor than the student who has learned quickly and has no learning problem. After the program is established, these students can be incorporated as tutors. As the teacher reviews students in an effort to select potential tutors, it is important to remember that students who are eliminated initially as potential tutors are not necessarily excluded permanently as tutors. The rigidity of the criteria for initial tutor selection can be reduced slightly as the tutoring program becomes more firmly established.

Selection of tutee: The best tutee is a student who is willing to be helped. An interest in being tutored is a far more important factor to be considered in selecting a potential tutee than is the level at which the student is functioning or the type of tutorial assistance the student needs. Often students who need extra practice or students who need to make up work missed during absences are potentially good tutees. Students who are easily distracted or who are not self-directed are also potentially good tutees. Another prospective group of tutees are those students who require learning task adaptations, such as students with reading problems, students who need activity partners, and students who need extra instruction.

Matching tutors and tutees: When the potential tutors and tutees are selected, it is then necessary to match each tutor to a tutee. The most important consideration in matching tutors to tutees is whether or not the tutor and the tutee can work well together. A

successful peer-tutoring program is in part based on the tutor-tutee relationship, and this relationship must be more than social compatibility.

In order to avoid having peer tutoring sessions turn into social occasions, other characteristics should be considered in the matching process. One important factor is the need to match tutors and tutees who can be empathetic and supportive to each other's needs. This may mean matching a shy tutor with a tutee who will accept and work well with this type of tutor. For the most part, it is wise to avoid placing students of the opposite sex in one-to-one tutoring situations because this could lead to socialization and unnecessary distraction or resentment.

Training of tutors: While training for tutors is not completely necessary, it is an important step for the success of the program. The preparation process should include an explanation of the role of the tutor, the procedures to be followed in tutoring, and the means of implementation of the peer tutoring sessions.

Tutor training should begin with an explanation of the role of the tutor. Since the potential tutor's conception of what a peer tutor does may conflict with the teacher's view of a tutor's role, this should be discussed early in the training process. Frequently tutors may feel that the primary objective of a tutoring session is task completion rather than the tutee's learning. In such instances, the tutor may complete the assigned work for the tutee rather than work through the assignment with the tutee. The tutor's role as a facilitator of learning needs to be specified, and the need for the

for the tutee to do his/her own work should be carefully explained.

The tutor's role in the management of other situations should also be discussed. Without prior training, some tutors may become too authoritative or overly aggressive in their efforts to teach the tutee. Consideration should then be given to the development of more suitable tutor-tutee interaction partners. Also, the tutor's role in discipline should be carefully explained. In general, it is best to eliminate all disciplinary activities from the tutor's role. However, if the tutor is not to serve as a disciplinarian, then he should know whom to call and what to do in the event that behavior problems arise. Lastly, there is a need to explain the procedures to be followed in the peer tutoring sessions. Research has shown that the greatest academic gain for the tutee comes when the tutoring session is clearly planned as to content, sequence, and procedure.

Implementation: The implementation of the peer tutoring session can be divided into three phases which should have been planned during the training sessions. The student tutor should know how to get the assignments and materials for the tutorial sessions. Tutors should know where all the supplies and equipment are kept and how to use these materials. The properly trained tutor should be able to obtain the assignment and prepare for the tutoring session unassisted.

A tutor should also be acquainted with the procedures for conducting a tutoring session. This should include appropriate places for the session, activities to be used in the session, and how to reinforce correct responses. The value of enthusiasm, motivation, and concern for

learning should be emphasized in the training sessions, possibly by simulation exercises with other tutor trainees. Lastly, the tutor should also know what to do once the session is completed. This would include replacing all materials and equipment in the appropriate places and providing the teacher with information regarding progress made during the session.

During the initial implementation of the actual tutoring sessions, the teacher should be readily available to handle any problems which may arise. Also, at this stage the teacher should carefully observe the tutor-tutee interaction. The teacher may need to give supervision or directions. However, once the tutor has demonstrated the ability to conduct tutoring sessions, the teacher can reduce the amount of direct supervision. Always, the teacher needs to give the tutor feedback regarding his/her performance.

Evaluation of peer tutoring programs: Evaluation of peer tutoring programs is necessary to demonstrate the program's efficiency in terms of the goals stated. Elaborate research programs may not be needed, but it is important to have objective data concerning the operation of the program. A simple method of gathering information concerning academic progress is the criterion-referenced pretest-posttest procedure. This process is relatively simple, and the data recorded can be kept in a student's folder.

Charts, checklists, or graphs may also be constructed. These devices often give great reinforcement to students as they see their accomplishments increase.

Gains in the affective domain such as an increase in self-concept or motivation are more difficult to measure. Some evaluation instruments for measurement in the affective domain might be found and used as pretest and posttest instruments. In addition, subjective measures such as teacher observation of increased on-task behavior, increased school attendance, or fewer inappropriate behavior incidents could be used. Tutors, tutees, and parents may be included in the evaluation through the use of simple opinion questionnaires concerning their views of the program.

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